

HEALTH ADVISORY



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Region 4 Public Health
Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum
counties, and Cowlitz Tribe

To: Physicians and other health care providers

Please distribute a copy of this information to each provider in your organization.

Questions regarding this information may be directed to the following Region 4 health officers:

Alan Melnick, MD, MPH, CPH
Health officer

Steven Krager, MD, MPH
Deputy health officer

Clark County Public Health, 564.397.8182
Cowlitz County Health & Human Services, 360.414.5599
Skamania County Community Health, 509.427.3850
Wahkiakum County Health & Human Services, 360.795.6207

Alert categories:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary.

Urgent need to increase influenza and COVID-19 vaccination rates and use of authorized/approved therapeutics

Summary

Respiratory virus activity is increasing in Southwest Washington. Increasing virus activity, coupled with low vaccination rates against influenza, COVID-19 and RSV could lead to more severe disease and increased health care capacity strain in the coming weeks.

In Washington, only 26% of residents have received an influenza vaccine this season, and only 15% of residents are up to date on their COVID-19 vaccinations. Among Washington adults 60 years and older, 15% have received the RSV vaccine.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Region 4 health officers are urging health care providers to:

1. administer influenza, COVID-19 and RSV vaccinations now to patients, if recommended.
2. recommend antiviral medications for influenza and COVID-19 for all eligible patients, especially patients at high-risk of progression to severe disease such as older adults and people with certain underlying medical conditions.
3. counsel patients about other everyday preventive actions they can do to protect themselves against respiratory diseases.

Requested actions

1. **Health care providers should administer influenza, COVID-19, and RSV immunizations now to patients, if recommended.** Immunizations can prevent hospitalization and death associated with these respiratory diseases.

Immunizations are especially important for people at increased risk for severe disease, including infants, older adults, pregnant people, and people with certain underlying medical conditions.

- **Everyone 6 months and older should receive a [2023–2024 seasonal influenza vaccine](#).** Most people need only one dose for the season. Adults ages 65 years and older should receive high-dose, adjuvanted or recombinant influenza vaccine, if available.
- **Everyone 6 months and older should receive at least one dose of an updated [2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccine](#).** More than one dose may be needed for children 6 months through 4 years, immunocompromised patients, and unvaccinated persons 12 years and older who choose to receive the Novavax vaccine.
- **Adults 60 years and older may receive one dose of [RSV vaccine](#) using shared clinical decision-making.** Individuals and their providers should consider the patient's risk for severe RSV disease. Older adults at highest risk of severe disease due to RSV include those with cardiopulmonary disease and those living in long-term care facilities.

- **Pregnant people 32 through 36 weeks gestation should receive [RSV vaccination](#).** Vaccination of pregnant people against RSV protects the infant against RSV after birth and is especially important given supply issues with nirsevimab this season.

2. Health care providers should recommend antiviral medications for influenza and COVID-19 for all eligible patients, especially patients at high-risk of progression to severe disease such as older adults and people with certain underlying medical conditions.

Antiviral medications are currently underutilized but are important to treat patients. Both influenza antiviral medications and COVID-19 antiviral medications are most effective in reducing the risk of complications when treatment is started as early as possible after symptom onset.

- **[Antiviral treatment of influenza](#) is recommended as soon as possible for persons who are at higher risk for influenza complications.** Persons with influenza who are not at higher risk and within two days of symptom onset can be prescribed antiviral treatment based upon clinical judgement to shorten their illness duration.
- **[COVID-19 antivirals](#) are recommended for treatment of mild to moderate COVID-19 in individuals at increased risk of severe illness** and can reduce the risk of hospitalization for a wide range of patients, including those who are 50 years and older and people with various medical conditions.
- COVID-19 antivirals can be taken safely even with many other medications. Clinicians should [evaluate drug-drug interactions](#) as some medications may need to be stopped or changed.
- COVID-19 antivirals can be accessed from providers, telehealth such as the free [Home Test to Treat program](#) (COVID-19 and influenza testing and antivirals available), [test-to-treat sites](#), and pharmacies with clinics.

3. Health care providers should counsel patients about other everyday preventive actions they can do to protect themselves against respiratory diseases, including testing, covering coughs and sneezes, washing hands, wearing a well-fitting mask, and improving ventilation in home and work environments.

Additional resources

- CDC [Influenza Antiviral Medications Summary for Clinicians](#)
- CDC [Interim Clinical Considerations for COVID-19 Treatment in Outpatients](#)
- National Institutes of Health [COVID-19 Treatment Guidelines](#)
- CDC Health Advisory, [Urgent Need to Increase Immunization Coverage for Influenza, COVID-19, and RSV and Use of Authorized/Approved Therapeutics in the Setting of Increased Respiratory Disease Activity During the 2023 – 2024 Winter Season](#)

To subscribe or unsubscribe from this listserv, email: Tippy.Hartford@clark.wa.gov.

Thank you for your partnership.

| Local health jurisdiction | Phone | Fax |
|--|--------------|--------------|
| Clark County Public Health | 564.397.8182 | 564.397.8080 |
| Cowlitz County Health & Human Services | 360.414.5599 | 360.425.7531 |
| Skamania County Community Health | 509.427.3850 | 509.427.0188 |
| Wahkiakum County Health and Human Services | 360.795.6207 | 360.795.6143 |